



THE GULL

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Golden Gate Audubon Society

THE ENDANGERED CALIFORNIA LEAST TERN—BREEDING BIOLOGY AND STATUS

Our May program will feature long-time GGAS board member Leora Feeney, sharing her knowledge and first hand experiences with the California Least Tern. The program will begin at 7:30 p.m. **Thursday, May 14** at the Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda in Berkeley.

The San Francisco Area is the northern most extent of the California Least Tern's geographic range, separated by gap of some 320 miles from the nearest colony to the south, located at Santa Barbara. Courtship, mating, parenting and post breeding activities are some of the topics to be discussed. The program will be illustrated by a collection of exquisite slides made available to GGAS by such noted photographers as Tom Roundtree, George Lepp and others. In addition, Leora will discuss problems facing this tern, colony managements policies, as well as local and statewide population changes since the beginning of the Least Tern recovery efforts in 1972.

GGAS has for years provided some financial support to assist the Least Tern's local breeding success at the Alameda Naval Air Station. It is a particularly special species to us. Leora Feeney has worked closely with the tern since 1982 as is really looking forward to sharing the fascinating and important story of this tern.

—JOELLA BUFFA

BURROWING OWLS

The Institute for Bird Populations has published the preliminary results of last summer's survey of Burrowing Owls in the Bay Region and the results, although not surprising, are cause for grave concern. Using known Burrowing Owl numbers and locations for the past five years as a baseline and including data going back ten years, intensive surveys of approximately 20% of the total census area of 17,000 square miles by volunteers from thirteen local Audubon chapters would seem to indicate that Burrowing Owl populations have dropped by as much as 63% in the last five years (75% in the last ten years), a decline that can be attributed almost entirely to habitat loss.

(continued on page 82)

BALLOT on page 91

ACADEMY OF SCIENCES

MAY 11 1992

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77

FIELD TRIPS CALENDAR

Saturday, May 2—Birding by Ear. Briones Regional Park. (Dave Cornman)

Sunday, May 3—Bouverie Audubon Preserve. (By reservation prior to April 10th.) (Markowitz/Ackerman)

Sunday, May 3—Wildcat Canyon Regional Park. (Malcolm Sproul)

Wednesday, May 13—Mini-trip to Briones Regional Park. (Wilcox/Spoelman)

For details on the above trips see *The GULL* for April.

Sunday, May 10—Mt. Diablo State Park. Meet at 9 a.m. at the Rock City parking lot—one mile after passing through the South Gate entrance station. Take Hwy. 24 to Walnut Creek then go south on I-680 to Danville. Take the Diablo Rd. exit, go left under the freeway and follow signs to Mt. Diablo State Park.

We will look for Rufous-crowned and Sage Sparrows, Blue-gray Gnatcatchers, swifts, swallows, woodpeckers and warblers. Riparian habitat should be good this year! Bring lunch and liquids. Trip ends about 1 p.m. Leader: David George (510) 339-0765. \$ (✓)

Saturday, May 16—Jack London State Park. Meet at 8 a.m. in the parking lot on the right. From the East Bay drive north on I-80 beyond Vallejo; exit on Hwy. 37 and go west to Hwy. 121. From San Francisco drive north on

Hwy. 101 beyond San Rafael; exit on Hwy. 37 and go east to Hwy. 121.

At the junction of Hwy. 121 go north about seven miles to Arnold Dr. and continue north on Arnold to Glen Ellen. At the General Store turn left and follow the signs to Jack London State Park. Allow one and one-quarter hours driving time from the S.F./Oakland area. We should see a variety of woodland birds including three kinds of vireos. Contents of Western Bluebird nesting boxes will be checked. Bring lunch and liquids. Leader: Rusty Scalf (510) 523-7108. \$ (✓)

Saturday, May 23—Beginners' Trip to Mountain Lake, San Francisco. Meet at the parking lot at the end of 15th Ave. (just north of Lake St.) at 8 a.m. Bring binoculars and a field guide if you have them. We expect to see three or four species of swallows plus a variety of waterbirds and landbirds during this two-hour walk. Leader: Anna Marie Bratton (415) 755-7925.

Friday-Sunday, May 29-31—Birding by Ear in Yosemite. The lower and middle elevations of Yosemite National Park are alive with singing birds in early June. A variety of habitats support a rich diversity of birdlife, typically including seven flycatchers (four Empidonax) three vireos, seven warblers, and many other species in full song and breeding plumage. Meet at the Big Oak flat entrance on Friday, May 31 at 3 p.m., and Saturday, June 1 at 7 a.m. (If you arrive later

Send address changes to office promptly; Post office does not forward *THE GULL*. Monthly meetings: second Thursday, 7:30 p.m. Joint membership — local and national \$30 per year (individual); \$38 (family); includes *AUDUBON* Magazine and *THE GULL*; to join, make checks payable to National Audubon Society and send to GGAS office to avoid delay in receiving *THE GULL*. Membership renewals should be sent directly to the National Audubon office. Subscriptions to *THE GULL* separately \$10 per year; single issues \$1. High school and college student membership \$18 per year. Senior citizen individual \$21, senior citizen family \$23. Associate Membership in Golden Gate Audubon Society, \$10 per year.

The Golden Gate Audubon Society, Inc. was established January 15, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948.

The *Gull* deadline is the first of the month for the following month, and July 15th for September issue.

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Saturday morning, meet the group in Hodgdon Meadow behind the Hodgdon Meadow Group Campsites.) The meeting place is the large parking lot 100 yards inside the park entrance on Hwy. 120.

Nearby campgrounds include Hodgdon Meadow (res. required) and Crane Flat in the Park, Carlon and Middle Fork (primitive Forest Service) on the road to Hetch Hetchy, and Sweetwater on Hwy. 120. Lodging on Hwy. 120 includes Yosemite Gatehouse (209/379-2260), Evergreen Lodge (209/379-2606), Lee's Middle Fork (209/962-7408), and Buck Meadows Lodge (209/962-6366). The meeting place is 30 miles from Yosemite Valley.

Bring warm clothes, raingear, rubber boots (wet meadows), be prepared to pack a lunch and walk about six miles. Leader: Dave Cornman (510) 825-2106) \$ (✓)

Wednesday, June 10—Mini-trip to Redwood Regional Park. Meet at the park at 9:30 a.m. Take the Warren Freeway (Hwy. 13), exit onto Redwood Rd. and proceed east about three miles to Redwood Gate, southern entrance to the park. Leave cars at the small parking lot, just inside parking lot on left. Bring lunch. We should see Black-headed Grosbeak, Swainson's Thrush, Northern Oriole, Solitary, Hutton's and Warbling Vireos. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301, and Jean-Marie Spoelman.

Saturday-Sunday, June 13-14—Yuba Pass and vicinity. On Saturday meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Yuba Pass Summit parking area (Hwy. 49) 15 miles east of Sierra City. Take I-80 to Truckee, go north on Hwy. 89 to Sierraville and take Hwy. 49 west to Yuba Summit. (Or take Hwy. 49 west northeast from Auburn for a slower but more scenic route.) We will bird the mountain areas for summer residents including dippers, flycatchers, warblers and Calliope Hummingbirds.

On Sunday meet at 8 a.m. at the inter-

section of Hwy. 49 and 89 (by the saw-mill) about 1 mile north of Sattley. We will caravan to Sierra Valley and look for many of the birds of the eastern Sierra including White-faced Ibis, Sandhill Cranes, Sage Thrashers and Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

Camping is available at the following U.S. Forest Service campgrounds off Hwy. 49: Wild Plum (elev. 3300') 2 mi. east of Sierra City, and Chapman Creek (elev. 5800') 8 mi. east of Sierra City. Lodging is available at Sierra City: Sierra Chalet (916-862-1110), Buttes Motel (916-862-1170), Herrington's Sierra Pines (916-862-1151), Basset Station Motel (916-862-1297), Sierra Buttes Inn Motel (916-862-1191), and Yuba River Inn (916-862-1122). Leader: Peter Allen (415) 892-8063. (✓)

Trips marked with \$ go to parks and other sites that require an entrance fee.

Carpooling arrangements will be attempted for trips marked (✓).

Problems: If you need a ride or can take a passenger, or if you need information and have difficulty contacting a field trip leader, call Russ Wilson, Field Trips Committee Chmn. (510) 524-2399.

Plan Ahead:

June 20-21—Mono Basin. Leaders: Helen and Paul Green.

June 26-28—Lassen Volcanic National Park. Leaders: Dan and Joan Murphy.

—FIELD TRIPS COMMITTEE

CONSERVATIONISTS NEEDED!

The San Francisco Conservation Committee needs a few good members. We just lost a wonderfully productive contributor when Scott Morrical's exciting career took him and his wife, Mila, to the East Coast. If you care about what's going on environmentally in the Bay Area, have a little free time, and would like to participate in some of the many

different conservation projects we are currently working on, come to our May meeting on Monday, May 4 at Dan Murphy's. Call (415) 564-0074 for more details.

A special need is for someone with a talent for writing to prepare material on conservation issues for *The GULL*. Maybe you?

MARCH OBSERVATIONS

It's not exactly Newtonian physics, but the idea's similar. *The San Francisco Chronicle* has decreed that *El Niño* is upon us once more and has made it sound as though the principal result, aside from some rainfall of questionable origin, is that barracuda and marlin will now be showing up in the local fishing catches. More warm water means, if the obvious can be forgiven, less cold water and it is one of the anomalies of the natural world that cold water is more life-sustaining than warm. The marine food chain originates at great depths with microscopic organisms which, as they rise toward the surface in upwellings from the deep, provide nourishment for myriad creatures of increasing size and complexity, which in turn provide nourishment, etc., etc. The extremely productive fisheries of the north Pacific along with the wealth of bird life that exists are due to and dependent upon the nutrient-rich cold waters of our ocean. While the warm water incursions of *El Niño* may bring some unusual semi-tropical fish and birds, they are relatively poor in nutrients and spell starvation and reproductive disaster for many species dependent upon the sea for food.

Around SE Farallon, the waters in March were even warmer than they were in 1983 and the supposition is that seabird nesting will fail just as it did in 1983—nestlings and fledglings cannot be fed when adults must spend all of their time foraging for enough food to keep themselves alive. Black-vented Shearwaters,

harbingers of warm water, were around in goodly numbers from the 22nd to the 25th, spotted from the San Mateo coast (RSTh, DP, SFB, KB, BS) and SE Farallon (PP). Also seen from Pigeon Point during the same period were two Black-footed Albatross, four Pink-footed Shearwaters, a Red Phalarope, three Pomerine Jaegers, and sixty Pigeon Guillemots. A Red-necked Grebe was at Berkeley Aquatic Park from the 20th to the 28th, hardly a spot where one might be expected (EMcL, GGe, ToC). On the 28th, fishermen from the Monterey fleet reported a **Blue-footed Booby** (fide MFe), supposedly the third time in as many weeks that the bird had been seen. It was never confirmed by details from any of the actual sighters, but anyone who has ever been on a pelagic trip will attest to the skill of some of the skippers at spotting and identifying seabirds. A **Frigatebird** appeared off SE Farallon on the 14th causing much consternation. The expected species here—not in great numbers, but once or twice a year—is Magnificent Frigatebird which breeds off Baja. This however was a sub-adult female with a black crown, gray throat, rufous in the cheeks and apparently short wings and tail, all fieldmarks of the Great Frigatebird, unknown in California waters (although there is a single record from Oklahoma); it lacked, however, alar bars (wing markings) that would distinguish it from Magnificent Frigatebird. It was photographed being chased by Western Gulls and there's hope that accurate physical measurements (a possible way of sorting out identification problems with this bird) can be determined from the photographs (PP).

A Eurasian-race Green-winged Teal continued to be seen in San Carlos (RSTh); another was at the south end of Tomales Bay nearly a year to the day after one was seen in exactly the same spot (RS). Four Tufted Ducks remained: Golden Gate Park, Lake Merced,

Oakland and Concord (mob). The **Steller's Eider** continued to be seen at Bodega Bay, it's plumage barely changed from last fall (JM). Three Harlequin Ducks remained off Chimney Rock at Point Reyes (BKa, WT); and a total of three Oldsquaws, one each at Point Reyes, San Leandro and the Pajaro River mouth (MBG, DFW, AWi, SGI, MiF, ELb).

A migrating Northern Goshawk, along with eight Cooper's Hawks, passed over Hayward on the 28th (RJR). Seven Lesser Golden Plovers remained at the Spaletta Plateau (mob); and over 200 Mountain Plovers were south of Woodland thru the 3rd (THK, GF, SH). A Franklin's Gull in Milpitas on the 2nd and 3rd (AWi, MiF); Glaucous Gulls at Half Moon Bay (RSTh, MiF), Hayward (SGI) and SE Farallon (PP) early in the month; and a possible Iceland Gull (a knotty identification problem that has thwarted and divided experts in the past) at Half Moon Bay on the 4th and 5th (RSTh, MiF) round out the gull sightings.

A good deal of jumping-up-and-down excitement occurred when a **Violet-crowned Hummingbird**, a Mexican species that shows up in southern Arizona in small but regular numbers, appeared in a yard lushly planted with native vegetation in Kenwood on the 28th (DN, JM). A probable immature bird with very white underpart, brown back, violet cap that appeared black in all but direct head-on views, and long, straight, black-tipped, red bill, it remained on the 29th to be viewed by the enthusiastic (but polite) hordes and then seems to have disappeared when the weather turned warm.

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers continued to be seen in Golden Gate Park (mob) and Carmel (RiC). A little invasion of Townsend's Solitaires brought up to four to Mt. Diablo (SGI, KGH, AWi) and additional individuals to Briones

(MaR, JAs, MnS), San Leandro (ToC, mob), and Mt. Tamalpais (RS). The Sage Thrasher stayed at the San Leandro Creek mouth (RJR, JM).

And spring migrants began to arrive, many at unprecedentedly early dates—Hammond's and Western Flycatchers, Solitary and Warbling Vireos, Orange-crowned and Wilson's Warblers. The woods are flooded with song. A Lucy's Warbler made a 3-day appearance in Half Moon Bay from the 4th to the 6th (DJK, SGI). The Summer Tanager stayed at Lake Merced (LLu, FG); the Rose-breasted Grosbeak nibbled away in Woodside (KGil). A Vesper Sparrow was at Tomales Point on the 22nd (JsC); a Harris' Sparrow in San Francisco on the 7th (JM). A Grasshopper Sparrow on SE Farallon on the 25th was a month and three days earlier than the previous early record (PP); another was in West Marin on the 28th. Two Chestnut-collared and up to twenty-five Lapland Longspurs were at the Spaletta Plateau through the month (mob), providing sometimes good, sometimes frustrating looks. The Chestnut-collareds tended to sequester themselves in the grass which was just long enough to hide them completely so they were mostly visible only in flight and had to be identified by call. The Laps, when they chose to prance on the manure stips, were lovely to behold and provided nice, contrasting views of winter and breeding-plumage individuals. Finally, an Orchard Oriole stopped in Bolinas from the 20th to the 25th (SNGH, KH, KB).

OBSERVERS: John Ascher, Stephen F. Bailey, Ken Burton, Rita Carratello, Josiah Clark, Tom Condit, Mike Feighner, Mark Fenner, George Finger, F. Gardner, G. Gerlach, Kevin Gilmartin, Steve Glover, Marguerite B. Gross, Keith Hansen, Shawn Hayes, Kevin G. Hints, Steven N. G. Howell, B. Katz, Dan J. Keller, Theodore H. Koundakjian, Earl Lebow, Leslie Lieurance, E. MacLaughlin, Joe Morlan, Dan Nelson, David Powell, Mark Rauzon,

Robert J. Richmond, Barry Saupee, Rich Stallcup, Maurey Stern, Ron S. Thorn, Walter Tordoff, Anna Wilcox, Dennis F. Wolff. Data thanks to Joe Morlan and the Northern California Rare Bird Alert.

—ANN DEWART

BURROWING OWLS

(continued from page 77)

Last summer's results were so devastating and the declines so precipitous that IBP has decided to expand the census area to include much of central and southern California where Burrowing Owls also breed, with the idea that if results there are as dire, action can be taken before the owls disappear altogether.

Golden Gate Audubon will be participating in the census again this year and once more volunteers are needed to cover assigned 3-km.-sq. blocks in Alameda, Contra Costa and western San Joaquin Counties between May 15 and June 15. There is a time commitment, but perseverance, attention to detail and the ability to recognize Burrowing Owls are more important qualifications than great birding experience and expertise. The Institute for Bird Populations will conduct a number of half-day training sessions at various locations prior to May 15 to cover identification and censusing techniques.

If interested, please contact Mark or Janet Homrighausen at 510/528-9339.

BAAC

Have we reported on the Bay Area Audubon Council?

For years, representatives of the Audubon chapters in the area have met several times a year, usually with people from National Audubon, the Western Regional Office of Audubon and the Richardson Bay Center. Recently, there has been a growing awareness of the need to meet more frequently and to improve the process. Actions proposed or

conclusions reached at one council meeting had to be carried back to the individual chapter boards, there deliberated, and returned to the council for further debate. It sometimes took many months to clarify differences, real or presumed, and to reach accord.

GGAS, Madrone, Marin, Mount Diablo, Napa-Solano, Ohlone, Santa Clara and Sequoia are the eight chapters represented. At the present time negotiations are in progress to develop a process by which the council can more expeditiously reach a consensus of the chapters. The objective is to make possible the increased influence the combined chapters will have when speaking in one voice, when that is possible.

As the plan stands at the moment, each chapter designates three representatives, the president, another officer and an at-large delegate from the chapter. These three agree on who shall cast the one vote to which the chapter is entitled. Meetings are bi-monthly and are held in rotation in the several counties. In rotation the chapters take responsibility for agenda, meeting place, minutes and mailings.

The values of getting to know people from other chapters are significant. Beyond just getting to know each other, shared experiences, shared insights, lead to more clarity and more effective chapter activity. In the eight chapters there are, not surprisingly, similar problems, and there are surprisingly different problems related to the patterns of land use, degree of urbanization, and nature of the economic activities of the area served by the chapter. For example, in some chapters there is a belief that Audubon's strong stand on forestry issues is responsible for a loss of membership. In other chapters the open space issue is divisive. Of course there are also differences in sizes and ages of the chapters.

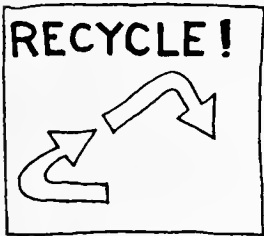
The changes being worked out in BAAC can be seen as a response to the growing attention focused on regional problems and methods of dealing with the planning process on a broader, perhaps regional, basis. In this sense, the ferment in BAAC is a very important development in the Audubon movement.

The minutes of the last BAAC meeting cover 4¼ single-spaced pages of terse reporting. The document is reflective of the serious wildlife and environmental issues requiring attention and the complexity of the administrative regulatory and legislative developments that have to be studied.

CONSERVATION NOTES

SOLAR BRIGADE

The National Audubon Society's Dept. of Scientific and Policy Research has written us about a new program being launched to encourage word-of-mouth agitation in behalf of solar energy research and development by local electrical utilities. Brochures will be available at the May meeting, and in the office. You can expect to hear more about this effort in *AUDUBON MAGAZINE*, and likely in *The GULL*. If it were possible to convert our utilities to just 10% solar energy, this single stroke would wipe out 170 million tons per year of carbon dioxide and help provide a long-term future for wildlife and humans.



RECYCLING REVISITED

(From *BAY AREA ACTION*, published by that organization in Palo Alto—(415) 321-1994)

Two years after Earth Day 1990, a glance at the nation's recycling record indicated mixed results.

Collections of recyclables have grown dramatically as more people are diverting more of their waste stream, indicating success at the supply end. But while the supply of recycled materials has more than doubled, demand for these products has not kept pace, resulting in a glut. Municipalities and recycling centers, faced with huge piles of unwanted recyclables, lack markets. In the Northeast, recycled newsprint fetches **minus** five dollars per ton. They literally cannot give it away, and instead must pay to have it removed. Recyclables on the West Coast are increasingly being shipped to Asia for lack of a domestic market.

Unfortunately, the imbalance will likely worsen before it improves. In California, where a 1989 state law (AB 939) mandates that cities divert 25% of waste streams by 1995 and 50% by 2000, supply will exceed demand.

The ubiquitous recycling symbol consisting of three arrows signifies the stages of the recycling process: collection, reprocessing and sale. We are doing great on the first stage of the process, but we are failing miserably at the second and third. The recycling process is dependent on each intermediate stage.

What can you do to help things along? Purchasing recycled products will increase their demand. As companies see demand increase, they will divert capital to satisfy it.

And practice source reduction—if you don't buy that soda bottle in the first place, that's one less bottle in the pile that your city or recycling center has to bother with.

—JAY PLATER

BACK YARD BIRDER

Tomales Bay was smooth in the spring sunshine and was filled with literally thousands of birds, mainly Brant. As I studied these small, handsome geese they slurped eel grass much as the childish part of me sucks up a strand of spaghetti. Tomales Bay, with its abundance of eel grass, supports a huge winter population of Brant. They would be soon winging their way to breed in the arctic tundra. The bay, ponds and marshes resembled a huge cocktail party for geese, ducks and shorebirds. There was displaying and courting everywhere we looked. Even the Northern Harriers put on a sky dance for us before their quick consumption of their "love." Meanwhile, there was a lot of eating going on. After all, birds not only eat to live, they live to eat. On the Atlantic coast eel grass was struck by a blight in the '30's which almost spelled an end to the Brant population. Luckily they expanded their tastes before it was too late.

We humans have forgotten that eons ago our species spent most of their waking hours hunting and gathering food. Now we tend to view mealtime as an event—or we grab something quick from readily-available sources. Birds' urges to feed are instinctual and nearly continuous. In fact, raptors are often stimulated by the process so much that they will catch, kill and then discard prey they don't need or want. This disturbs people who believe nothing in nature is wantonly destroyed or wasted. No doubt the discarded prey will be put to good use by some other animal but it was killed "needlessly."

When scientists first became interested in what specific birds ate, they killed them and analyzed the stomach contents. This is no longer condoned or practical, but we are still expanding our knowledge of bird diets through keen

observation. Basically, birds will eat anything except the ubiquitous plastic and other manmade substances we humans discard. Aside from organic and animal bits, even sand, shells, pebbles, salt and/or water are eaten. Oddly, fungi are not high on birds' lists of delicacies.

Some birds are so fussy and narrow in their food desires that they may endanger their futures. e.g. The Limpkin and the Snail Kite of the Florida Everglades prefer large freshwater snails over all other food. These bird populations vary according to the availability of the apple snail. On the opposite end of the scale is the gull family, known to eat plants, live vertebrates and invertebrates as well as carrion and waste products. And who would guess that the Ruffed Grouse is known to have eaten parts of 414 species of plants and 580 species of animals? Wonder how many grouse stomachs went into those statistics?

It is known that most birds have characteristic food choices: osprey prefer fish and hummingbirds prefer nectar while many species prefer insects or seeds. But, depending on availability, birds will vary their diets. It is no coincidence that through evolution birds are breeding just when there is an abundance of preferred food available. The young are ensured a healthy start in life. And, if birds do not vary their diet during seasonal changes, they will migrate to find food.

To complicate matters, even the species will eat different things depending upon their locale. e.g. Yellow Warblers living in Nebraska adore grasshoppers while their relatives in Massachusetts dine on plant lice and gypsy moth caterpillars. Seaside Peregrine Falcons delight in a shorebird menu while those who live in Colorado prefer doves and squab. The Herring Gull who lives on a pristine coast has never sampled a leftover TV dinner as has his city-bred relative.

The study of birds' diets is an ongoing one. If watching birds is not enough for you, expand your horizons to include identifying insects. Your keen observances could add to scientific knowledge.

—MEG PAULETICH

AUDUBON'S TEN TOP TIPS FOR SAVING THE PLANET



RESEARCH ENERGY EFFICIENCY BEFORE YOU BUY: Fuel economy and energy efficiency vary among cars and appliances. Research and consider these factors as carefully as you consider price. Write for a copy of the Audubon Activist Carbon Dioxide Diet Poster for more specific tips on how to cut down on your energy calories.

Consumer Reports
256 Washington Street
Mount Vernon, NY 10553
and

The American Council for an
Energy Efficient Economy
1001 Connecticut Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20036

are also good sources for information.

1922 TRIPPER

One of the best things about answering phone calls to the office is the opportunity to speak to some of our most delightful members. Last week as result of our 75th anniversary reminiscences in *The GULL*, a participant in the 1922 Farallones trip called. **Mr. Louis Rapp**, who will be 90 years old this year, went along on that 1922 trip and remembers fondly other excursions with our precursor the "Audubon Association of the Pacific."

We're delighted that Mr. Rapp reads *The GULL* and responds; we encourage any other members with long memories to share those experiences with us in this anniversary year.

—BARBARA RIVENES

BIRD PHOTOGRAPHERS

The June meeting of the Bay Area Bird Photographers will be June 3rd, the first Wednesday. The program will be presented by Ian Tait, an early BABP member absent from the Bay Area for several years. Most of you have probably seen Ian's work—you certainly have if you are a member of PRBO. His presentation is to be entitled "A Bird Photographer's Year" and it will feature pictures from various parts of the world. All BABP meetings take place from 7:30–9:30 p.m. at Palo Alto's Lucy Evans Baylands Interpretive Center on East Embarcadero Road.

THE

MONTHLY



GULL

BULLETIN

VOLUME 8

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, MAY, 1926

NUMBER 5

PROCEEDINGS OF APRIL MEETING: The one hundred-eleventh regular meeting of the Association was held on April 8th, in the Assembly Hall of the San Francisco Public Library, with President Kibbe in the chair; Mrs. Parry, Acting Secretary; twelve members and three guests braved the very inclement weather, which, however, was not quite as bad as upon the occasion of Dr. Storer's last previous lecture.

In the effort to expedite the business session, no matter of importance was presented for consideration, except the pending legislation providing for the acquisition and administration of refuges for migratory birds. In this connection Mr. Smith presented the following resolution, which, after seconding by Mrs. Kibbe, was unanimously adopted:

WHEREAS, the Audubon Association of the Pacific has for several years considered the problem of sustenance of our Migratory Water Fowl during the periods of their sojourn in our country, and

WHEREAS, such consideration has shown the futility of protecting the birds from slaughter while we are at the same time draining the lakes and marshes upon which they are dependent for resting places and for sustenance, and

WHEREAS, we are convinced that the Migratory Bird Refuge and Marsh Land Conservation Act, in its present form, (Senate 2607, H. R. 7479), offers a business-like solution of this problem, and provides for administration of the necessary refuge areas by the Federal Bureau most competent and appropriate for the purposes,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Audubon Association of the Pacific respectfully urge upon our Senators and Representatives in Congress, the importance of prompt and favorable action in respect of this measure for the salvation of our migratory water fowl and ask that they do everything in their power to bring it to a vote at the earliest possible time.

Dr. Tracy I. Storer, Assistant Professor of Zoology and Zoologist at the University of California College of Agriculture at Davis, then entertained those present with one of the most interesting lectures that have ever been delivered at our meetings. Dr. Storer covered the entire range of "Avian Architecture", from the rudimentary nest on the bare ground to the most elaborate and highly insulated and protective type; from a loose network of twigs, barely sufficient to hold the eggs, to the enclosed, weather-tight and carefully lined domicile. He reviewed the breeding cycle and outlined the considerations which governed the locations of nests, in the respects of territory, altitude and character of support. While the location of nests is usually related to the habitual foraging range of the species, there are many exceptions. The song sparrow nests in thickets, where it forages, but the lutescent warbler and the solitaire, foraging well above ground, yet build their nests on the ground. Sea birds must nest where they can deposit their eggs, but they forage out at sea.

The participation of the two sexes was noted; how the male selects the general area and the female, the exact location; how the nest-building, usu-

ally the work of the female, is sometimes shared by the male; how the phalaropes reverse the usual distribution of labor in the breeding cycle. The lecturer described certain characteristic peculiarities in construction, such as the bit of snake skin which adorns the nest of the ashy-throated flycatcher, and described at considerable length diagnostic forms of many species or groups. The lecture was profusely illustrated by lantern slides, and at its conclusion the meeting adjourned with expressions of high appreciation on the part of the audience.



THE CALIFORNIA CONDOR—A MODERN ROC

Excerpt from an article by WALTER FRY, in charge, Nature Guide Service, Sequoia National Park, in *Bulletin of the American Game Protective Association*, April, 1926.

The California condor is the largest of the Vulture family. In fact, it is probably the largest flying bird in the world. The condor is heavily built, weighs about 20 pounds and is about four feet long, with a wing spread of 10 to 12 feet. Its bare neck is like a turkey. The huge bird flies gracefully and soars for hours almost without flapping its wings. The condor is a scavenger, eating only carrion.

The only bird resembling the condor is the buzzard. But the condor when standing may at once be distinguished by the white border of the greater wing coverts and neck muffler, and when in flight by the white spots under the wing coverts.

I have seen several condors in the park and have been much interested in their methods of taking flight from the ground. The big birds apparently cannot rise directly from the ground but run along with wings outspread, catching the air gradually, bumping along and helping with their feet for all the world like a low-powered aeroplane taking flight.

While the California condor has not been found nesting in the Sequoia National Park, this giant of the air and king of birds has been a casual visitor to the park ever since the first arrival of white settlers in 1856. Early day settlers proclaim that the birds were frequently seen but the condors have come less and less frequently, so that for several years past it has been feared that each occurrence would give the last sight of this fast vanishing species of bird life. The inroads of settlement, persistent shooting, robbing nests of eggs, poison baits set out for coyotes and the fact that the birds are not prolific breeders, reduced them so rapidly that the species was practically wiped out before people realized what was happening and before laws could be enacted to save them.

Before the arrival of white men in California, the condor had little to fear, but when man appeared on the scene to upset all the workings of nature with his death-dealing methods, this useful and picturesque species rapidly diminished and may soon be extinct.

The first death trap for the condor was man with firearms. It was a great event to kill one of these giant navigators of the air for they were bold and came within easy rifle range. Man's next destructive effort was to obtain eggs of the wonderful bird to accompany his specimen. Then came the custom of the sheepmen, of putting out poison baits in the carcasses of sheep. No doubt thousands of condors met their death through eating poison. For many years there were no restrictions placed on the methods of poisoning or what kinds of poison could be used. It seemed every man's privilege to use the most deadly poison for the purpose that he could obtain. As an illustration of this, while I was stopping at Huron, Fresno County, California, during 1890, Mr. Manuel Cadoza, a sheep-herder, brought in two beautiful dead condors. These birds had died from eating poison. Coyotes had killed two of his sheep and he had poisoned the carcasses in the hope of killing the coyotes; but instead of getting the animals he got the two big birds that had been feeding on the dead sheep. Cadoza said that he noticed several of the condors around the poisoned sheep the day before and upon going out in the evening found the dead ones a few yards from the bait.

These were the first condors that I had seen and such was their size and curious appearance, they seemed to me rather the birds of some fabulous tale than ones that lived in these modern days.

The California condor is now making its last fight for life. Unless some action is taken to save the modern roc it will join the dodo and the great auk as a legend instead of a living example of the Creator's handiwork. This monstrous bird is the product of nature working through the ages for thousands or millions of years. The destruction of the species thus deprives the earth of a wonderful organism which no human power can ever again restore. Even under the present laws for their protection I can see no chance for the survival of the condor. Poison will do its work. They are now on the very verge of extermination. It is doubtful if there are 100 individuals living to-day. Every friend of birds and of the picturesque in nature should come to the rescue of the condor before it is too late.

On November 27, 1925, there was unveiled at the Los Angeles Museum of History, Science and Art a large mural painting of prehistoric animals, birds and other creatures of California. The paintings were based on skeletons dug from the La Brea asphalt pits near Los Angeles. Among the pictures are those of giant vultures with a wing spread of 20 feet, sabre-toothed tigers, giant ground sloths, huge wolves, imperial elephants with huge curved tusks, wild horses, camels and California lions twice the size of the present day African lion. In the process of evolution this terrible, if interesting, fauna doubtless had to give way or man might not be here to-day. But in the condor we have perhaps the last great bird of the Pleistocene Age, just as the giant sequoias are the surviving specimens of a mammoth vegetation of a past geological period. The condor is not only harmless, it is useful and highly picturesque. Let us save this modern roc, every sight of which conjures up the tale of Sinbad, the sailor, in the Arabian Nights.

Only quick action will save the condor. The following are suggestions:

1. Laws to make it a felony to kill a condor or take eggs for a period of twenty years.
2. Laws making it a misdemeanor for any person to put out poisoned bait of any kind, except that which has been certified for use by the proper authorities.
3. Signs posted at conspicuous places throughout the state by Audubon societies and other interested organizations, carrying a colored picture of the bird, with printed copies of the laws for its protection.
4. When condors are seen in any part of the state, the observer should be requested to immediately notify the California Fish and Game Commissioners of the birds' presence, giving date seen, locality, and number of birds seen.



AUDUBON ASSOCIATION OF THE PACIFIC

FOR THE STUDY AND THE PROTECTION OF BIRDS

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NEWS FROM OUR RANCH

Audubon Canyon Ranch (415) 868-9244
Shoreline Hwy., Stinson Beach, CA 94970
Wildlife Sanctuaries & Centers for Nature Education
under joint sponsorship of Golden Gate, Madrone, Marin
and Sequoia Audubon Societies

Gary Holloway, President

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DOCENT TRAINING AT BOLINAS LAAGOON

There are many ways to volunteer at Audubon Canyon Ranch, but perhaps the most rewarding is to become an ACR docent. Our next docent training class will be held at the Bolinas Lagoon Preserve between September 9 and March 3. Orientation and interview days are planned for May 27 and August 26. Tuition is \$75. Partial scholarships are available. If you are interested in sharing the joy of the Ranch or if you want a little more information please call us at (415) 868-9244.

SPRING CALENDAR NOTES

Check *The GULL* for April for full details about our remaining spring seminars. All seminars require advanced reservations. Please call Edris at (415) 868-9244.

8th Annual Downhill Hike at the Bolinas Lagoon Preserve on May 16, with Ray Peterson (\$10).

The Ecology of Herons & Egrets at the Bolinas Lagoon Preserve on June 20, with John Kelly and Phillip Loring Greene (\$35).

Butterfly Counts are scheduled in Marin County on June 27, in Sonoma County on June 28, and of course we'll have:

Get-to-know-the-critters night on June 24. All this and Ray Peterson for just \$5.

Natural History for Teachers at Bolinas, Cypress Grove and Bouverie Sanctuaries during the week of July

20-24 with John Kelly, John Petersen and Ray Peterson (\$175). If you teach elementary science and need 3 semester units don't miss it.

BOUVERIE GUIDED NATURE WALKS

Docent led walks continue at the Bouverie Audubon Preserve in Sonoma. Wildflowers should be in decline, but singing birds will still add to your visit. And don't forget that no matter when you visit the Bouverie Preserve, our wonderful docents will guide you on our paths, and add immeasurably to your visit. Dates are Saturdays: May 9 & 23. Walks begin at 9:30 a.m. and end around 1:30 p.m. Reservations for these free walks are required, so call early. (707) 938-4554.

RANCH NOTES

Nine pairs of Great Blue Herons finally set-up nests. By the end of March, forty-two Great Egret nests were established and several more will probably be started during April. A few pairs of Snowy Egrets will probably establish nests by the beginning of May. Wildflowers were spectacular during March, but should be well beyond their peak by May. If you want to see the Ranch's final bloom, check the upper parts of Pitcher Canyon. . . . And who's going to be enjoying our natural wonders? Well, you will if you make it out to Bolinas Lagoon before mid July. Then there are the school children. Ninety-one classes are scheduled to visit the Ranch this spring and 39 of those would be unable to make the visit without the support of our friends at Bank of America who have most generously provided us with a \$14,000 transportation grant.

We're still looking for weekend hosts. Call Edris at (415) 868-9244 to help greet our many visitors.

—DAN MURPHY

BAY AREA WETLANDS WORKSHOP

Saturday, May 9, 1992 at 9:15 a.m. at the Richardson Bay Audubon Sanctuary, 876 Greenwood Beach Road, Tiburon, there will be a workshop for wetlands protection and enhancement.

The convenor is Trish Mulvey, Santa Clara Valley Audubon Society. The morning presentation is by Jesse Grantham, National Audubon Society on "Saving Wetlands—A Citizen's Guide for Action". The afternoon sessions include Steve Ritchie, Executive Officer, Regional Water Quality Control Board, "How This Program Can Work", and Barbara Salzman, Marin Audubon Society, "Making the Program Work." Then Rick Epstein and Florence La Riviere, of Citizens to Complete the Refuge, will discuss "North Bay Wetlands Aquisition." A Discussion moderated by Marc Holmes of the Save San Francisco Bay Association, will complete the workshop.

Questions may be directed to Trish Mulvey (415) 326-0252 or Marc Holmes (510) 452-9261.

BARBARA RIVENES

Our office manager has, with regret, notified the board of directors of her intention to resign when a suitable replacement has been found. She has endeared herself to the many active members of GGAS by her enthusiasm, effectiveness, competence and warmth. Over the years of her service she has given more than full measure to the chapter and the Audubon cause. Barbara, we thank you!

She has accepted the chairmanship of the membership committee, which carries with it a place on the GGAS board of directors.

A search has begun to find a successor. The office manager is a part-time (24-hours per week), paid position.

GIFTS and BEQUESTS

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Berkeley Garden Club

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